(Account-2001) for getting 3000 software licences without offering tender; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The Army HQ had entered into an agreement with M/s Armies Soft for 300 Unit Accounts Software Packages in March, 2001 after following the prescribed procurement procedure.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Fire in Mamoon Cantonment Ammunition Dump at Pathankot

522. DR. KARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a big fire with a series of hundreds of blasts engulfed the Mamoon Cantonment Ammunition Dump at Pathankot, on 29th April, 2001;

(b) if so, the loss of lives, if any, and the damage caused thereby;

(c) the cause of the fire; and

(d) the number of such fires in Cantonments, Ordnance Factories and Ammunition Dumps during 1999-2000, 2000-2001 and the current year, so far, indicating the details thereof, and the steps taken to prevent such fires in future?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) to (d) An incident of fire occurred at 2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 Field Ammunition Depot), Mamoon (Pathankot) on 29.4.2001. There was no loss of life. Loss of ammunition has been assessed as Rs. 27.69 crores (approximate). In the absence of sufficient proof, the Court of Inquiry has not been able to conclusively establish the cause of fire.

The details of fire incidents which have occurred in Ordnance/ Ammunition Depots of the Army during the period 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 till date arc as under:—

(i) Ammunition Depot, Bharatpur (28th April, 2000)

(ii) Ammunition Depot. Dehu Road (3rd May, 2000)

(iii) 2 Ammunition Sub Depot (18 Field Ammunition Depot), Mamoon (Pathankot), (29th April, 2001)

(iv) 2 Ammunition Sub Depot (24 Field Ammunition Depot), Birdhwal (Ganganagar) (24th May, 2001)

The following steps have been taken to prevent occurence of such fires iii future:—

(i) All depots have been directed to update safety and security instructions.

(ii) All depots have been inspected by a Board of Officers to check adequacy of safety and security arrangements.

(iii) Shortages in fire fighting equipment arc being made up and defective equipment repaired.

(iv) Unserviceable ammunition is being disposed off on priority.

(v) Allotment of additional funds for creation of more storage accommodation, for shifting ammunition presently stored on open plinths under canvas to Explosive Stores Houses.

The details of fire incident occurred in various Ordnance Factories during 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 till date are as under:—

(a) *Ordnance Factory, Bhandara:* The fire took place on 28.8.1999 causing loss to the extent to Rs. 5,96,211/-. The cause of fire was stated to be lightening on inflammable material kept in the pressing room.

(b) *Ordnace Factory, Dehu Road:* The fire took place on 28.10.1999 causing loss to the extent of Rs. 20,000/only. Fire might have been caused due to friction between high speed drill bit and accumulated explosive powder from candles.

(c) *Ordnance Factory, Chanda:* The fire took place on 22.3.2000 causing loss of the extent of Rs. 4,49,610/-. Fire might have occurred due to leakage of elasticized. White Phosphorus from filled 81mm bomb body and its exposure in atomospheric condition, causing initiation of fire due to auto ignition.

In all cases of fire incidents that occured in Ordnance Factories, Board of Enquiry to investigate into the cause of fire was constituted and remedial measures as suggested by the Board have been implemented.